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SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT OF SOUTHERN SUDAN CABINET RESHUFFLE

¶11. (SBU) SUMMARY. President Kiir has changed ten of the 24 positions in the Government of Southern Sudan's (GoSS) Council of Ministers. Most notably, SPLA Chief of Staff Oyai Deng has been named Minister of Regional Cooperation and Kuol Athian Mawein was dismissed as Finance Minister, the third such change at Finance in the past three years. The shifts appear aimed at responding to the multiple challenges now confronting the GoSS. END SUMMARY.

¶12. (U) President Salva Kiir Mayardit shuffled the GoSS cabinet on May 31, replacing or transferring ten out of 24 members of the Council of Ministers. Four of these individuals (Finance Minister Kuol Athian Mawein, Rural Development Minister Phillip Yona Jambi, Gender, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs Minister Mary Kidden Kimbo, and Culture, Youth and Sports Minister Albino Akol Akol) have departed the government. The remaining six were transferred to different portfolios within the Council of Ministers.

¶13. (U) The newly-appointed Ministers are:

Minister of Internal Affairs - Gier Chuang Aluang (transferred from the Ministry of Telecommunications and Post, replacing Paul Mayom Akec)

Minister of Finance and Economic Planning - David Deng Athorbei (from Transport and Roads, replacing Kuol Athian Mawien)

Minister of Regional Cooperation - Gen. Oyai Deng Ajak (formerly Chief of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) General Staff, replacing Dr. Barnaba Marial Benjamin)

Minister of Transport and Roads - Anthony Lino Makana (from Commerce and Industry, replacing David Deng Athorbei)

Minister of Commerce and Industry - Dr. Barnaba Marial Benjamin (from Regional Cooperation, replacing Anthony Lino Makana)

Minister for Cooperatives and Rural Development - Peter Abdel-Rahaman Sule (new to the cabinet from Sudan's National Assembly, replacing Prof. Phillip Yona Jambi)

Minister of Information and Broadcasting - Paul Mayom Akec (from Ministry of Internal Affairs, replacing Gabriel Changson Chang)

Minister of Telecommunications and Postal Services - Madut Biar (new to cabinet, replacing Gier Chuang Aluong)

Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports - Gabriel Changson Chang (from Information and Broadcasting, replacing Albino Akol Akol)

In addition, no replacement has been announced so far for Minister of Gender, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs Mary Kidden Kimbo.

¶14. (SBU) The most noteworthy and surprising change is the

appointment of SPLA Chief of Staff General Oyai Deng Ajak as Minister of Regional Cooperation (the de facto GoSS Foreign Ministry), replacing Dr. Barnaba Marial Benjamin, who was transferred to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. On June 1, President Kiir named SPLA Chief of Operations Major General James Hoth as Oyai's successor as Chief of Staff. Also significant is the dismissal from the government of Finance and Planning Minister Kuol Athian Mawien, and the appointment of Gier Chuang Aluong as Minister of Internal Affairs, in place of Paul Mayom Akec, who was moved to the Information and Broadcasting Ministry. The removal of Mawein as the GoSS faces continued, severe budgetary challenges, means that southern Sudan will have had four different Finance Ministers within three years.

¶5. (SBU) In addition to Oyai Deng, Peter Abdel-Rahama Sule as Minister of Cooperatives and Rural Development, and Madut Biar as Minister of Telecommunications and Postal Services are new to the cabinet. Sule is a member of the United Democratic Front, (UDF) and had been the leader of the southern opposition in Sudan's National Assembly. Madut Biar is an SPLA commander who previously had served as governor of Northern Bahr al Ghazal state. With the appointment of Sule, the departure of opposition party-members Jambi (UDF) and Akol Akol (United Democratic Southern Front), and Mary Kidden's position temporarily vacant, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, at least for the present time, will have one more position in the cabinet than previously. This will push the SPLM above the 70 percent share of cabinet positions set in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, unless Mary Kidden's successor is from the southern opposition.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: The restructured cabinet appears to be a response to the multiple challenges the GoSS is currently facing.

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Gier Chuang Aluong, an experienced military commander with a hard-line reputation, replaces Paul Mayom, an attorney, at the Internal Affairs Ministry. This change comes at a time when southern Sudan is beset by escalating tribal violence and lawlessness (an estimated 1000 people have died in tribal fighting in Jonglei state in recent months.) David Deng replaces the ineffective Kuol Mawien at Finance as the GoSS wrestles with depressed revenues on top of undisciplined spending and rampant corruption. The need to fill the Chief of Staff slot with the departure of Oyai Deng provides President Kiir with the opportunity to further restructure personnel in the top ranks of the SPLA. A second wave of GoSS reshuffling is expected to follow at the under-secretary (i.e., deputy ministerial) level and within a handful of state cabinets as well.

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